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ABSTRACT

This paper, part of a research monograph series, focuses on a philosophy of education which is humanistic. The author discusses theories of art education, using as an example of visual art Giorgione's "The Tempest". A synopsis of what needs to be known in order to appreciate the various levels of significance in a great work of visual art precedes a discussion of the problems of appropriate learning and teaching techniques in the arts. (SHM)

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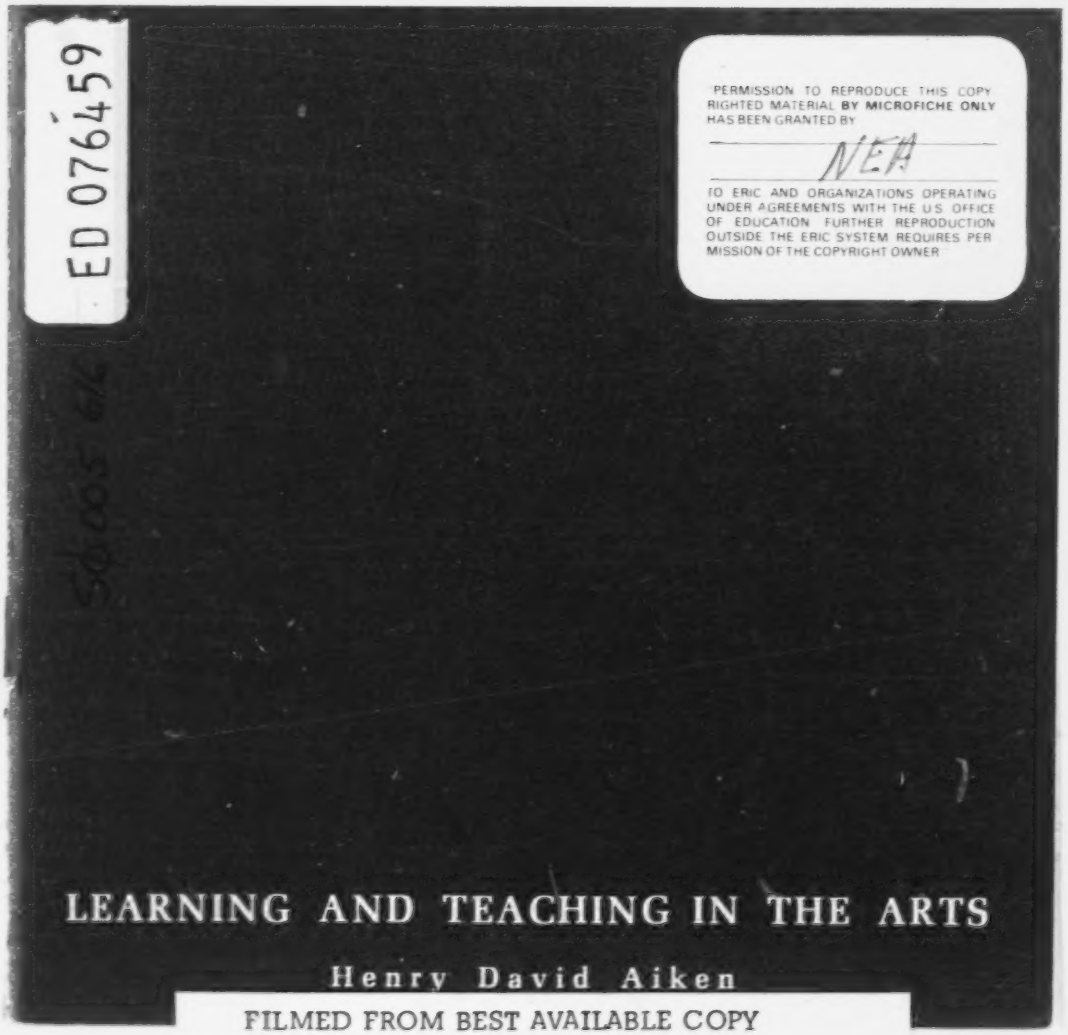
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RESEARCH MONOGRAPH #4

LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE ARTS

Henry David Aiken

This is the fourth in a series of Monographs sponsored
by the Viktor Lowenfeld Memorial Fund

The National Art Education Association
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W.
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Introduction to the Fourth Viktor Lowenfeld Monograph Series

Henry D. Aiken, who teaches philosophy at Brandeis University, gave the talk on which this paper is based at the National Art Education Association Convention in New York, in April, 1969, as the Fourth Lowenfeld Memorial Lecture. As I heard Dr. Aiken through on that original occasion, and again as I reread his finished paper, I was convinced we had made a good choice for the extension of the series, in this the Fourth Viktor Lowenfeld Monograph.

In keeping with the original intent of the series, Dr. Aiken's ideas provide us with that point of leverage from outside whereby we can pry loose for reconsideration a number of unexamined assumptions about art education. I invite the reader to ponder such claims as that what we teach and what is learned in art are poorly correlated, and that this is part of the essential freedom of art; that there are no criteria we can carry safely from work to work; that in teaching art we have no *methodus* but only a *modus;* or that there is "knowledge" only to be gained by picking up the brush and getting the feel of paint. The example of his personal response to one painting is a telling object lesson of the layers upon layers of complexity that are our proper concern in approaching art—a concern not to be circumscribed by easy pronouncements about what is centrally aesthetic and non-aesthetic.

As with Dr. Aiken's other writings, I commend this one to the reader. It is a welcome addition to the Monograph Series.

Kenneth R. Beittel
The Pennsylvania State University

LEARNING AND TEACHING IN THE ARTS: Henry David Aiken

In our time the ascendancy of the natural sciences within the higher learning has been no less spectacular, at least among the cognoscenti, than the monumental contributions of scientific technology which seem indeed to presage a new age of man. Their methods, as well as the characteristic attitudes of those who employ them, are everywhere admired. Where such methods are emulated, as in the harder behavioral sciences, the disciplines in question automatically advance in academic prestige. And where their applications have proved less successful as in the softer "sciences of man," such as history, depth psychology, and government, their very status as genuine cognitive disciplines is called in question.[1] As for the humanities, their place within the scheme of higher education is now totally confused and insecure.

On the one side, their place is increasingly preempted by scholar-scientists who seek to analyse works and movements of literature and art in terms supplied by relevant behavioral sciences. On the other, courses of instruction hitherto assigned to them are now incorporated within general education programs whose admittedly acculturative purposes can be as well (or better) served in secondary schools as in institutions of higher learning where they waste the time of both productive professors and their students. In the former case the work of serious scholars might (in principle) as well be parcelled out among the behavioral sciences in question or else placed within certain "area studies" in which the respective resources of such sciences are pooled together for the sake of a particular common inquiry. And if, for reasons of academic accommodation and convenience, they are still conducted under the auspices of traditional departments of English and foreign languages or of fine arts and music, this in no way affects th. nature

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[1] This fact was graphically and amusingly revealed some years ago during a debate within the Harvard Faculty over certain proposals to regroup courses offered in the General Education program in such a way that courses in the harder social sciences would now be listed simply as "sciences" and those in the softer ones would be listed under the humanities. Historians and social scientists whose offerings would thenceforth fall within the humanities at once perceived a mortal blow to their academic prestige, despite the Committee's disclaimer that the only purpose of the reclassification was one of convenience. As it turned out, they managed to defeat the proposals, thus retaining their formal status as social *scientists*, though the actual content of their courses and the methods employed in teaching them remained precisely the same as they had been before.

of the findings in question or the methods by which such findings are certified. In the latter case, unhappily, humanistic courses of study are treated essentially as forms of "training" whose only function within the university is remedial. By the nature of the case, those who give such courses are regarded as having no cognitive subject-matter and so as making no significant contribution either to the propagation or advancement of learning. In fact they are recognized as "teachers" only in the looser honorific sense of the term which is sometimes applied also to religious leaders, moralists, and retired statesmen. Their role (so it is argued) is merely to arouse interests, to form attitudes, and to refine feelings. This is not to deny that the student usually picks up an assortment of information (or, more likely, misinformation) in the course of such cultural massages. For in order to focus and structure students' attitudes his trainer is bound to introduce certain objective explanations and arguments into his discussions. But he does so only interstitially and for the sake of ends having nothing intrinsically to do with the forms of intellectual enlightenment to which the higher learning is properly and exclusively dedicated.

Either way the "humanist" is bound to find his situation unsatisfactory. If he elects to become a scholar, the interests which initially attracted him to literature, music, or the fine arts are eliminated from his work as a scholar-teacher and must be cultivated during his leisure time. If on the other hand he insists on giving courses in the "appreciation" of literature or art, he finds himself in a kind of academic limbo, along with the football coach or the resident chaplain.

Everywhere, in short, it is taken for granted that the paradigmatic form of human knowledge is that which achieves its highest perfection in the "exact" sciences of mathematics and physics. From this point of view, and the educational ideology attending it, the only truly educational function of humanistic activities within the "house of the intellect", as Professor Barzun calls the university, is the propagation of some form of scientific knowledge and the methodological studies essential to its reception. All else, no matter how appetizingly packaged, is an acculturative service. And if the term "education" is still applied in its own looser honorific sense to such services, the result in no sense involves a principled philosophical enlargement of our conceptions of knowledge and learning but only a dubious increase in the comprehension of a term which serves merely to legitimate the miscellaneous enterprises to which the multiversity is nowadays committed.

The more general aim of this essay, as of some others which I have

recently published in the philosophy of education, is to make a further dent in this reigning educational ideology and the theories of knowledge and hence of learning and teaching that lie behind it. Here, however, my specific purpose is to help to restore to the humanities their own distinctive and integral positions within the higher learning, thereby returning to the house of the intellect one of the grandest of its mansions.

But if my purpose is normative, my argument is analytical. I contend, and mean to show with the help of a particular example, that, as the terms "knowledge," "learning," and "teaching" are characteristically employed, both in the conduct of our everyday affairs and in our developing efforts to come to terms with the great achievements of the human imagination of which the arts are perhaps the most conspicuous example, the sciences represent neither the only, the primary, nor essentially the highest form of knowledge. From this point of view the knowledge about works of art and imaginative literature made available to us by scientific scholarship, although immensely useful in its way, can never take us to the heart of the matter: the illumination of the art object as a work of art.[2]

It is no part of my purpose, let me emphasize, to deny that the arts (like the sciences, also) commonly afford gratifications that are noncognitive. But such gratifications usually, although not always, depend directly upon modes of perception and thought which involve the whole activity of the human mind. This is true, moreover, not only in the case of works in such genres as narrative literature and representational painting, in which apprehensions of what is stated or represented are necessary to understanding of the works as forms of art, but also of works in other genres where ordinary questions of so-called descriptive or representational (and hence, according to the

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[2] Here I am concerned only with one main sense of the phrase "work of art." I do not claim that this is its only meaning. In fact this term, like other recurrent terms and phrases of critical humanistic discourse, such as "art," "fine art," and "aesthetic," has acquired a whole range of meanings during the history of its use. In another essay, "Art and Anti-Art" (See *The Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 2, Number 3, July 1968, pp. 105-120.) I briefly consider some of the circumstances in which these terms were first introduced and subsequently modified. From the point of view of a philosophy of humanistic education, the extraordinary history of these ideas is of the greatest interest. For it shows not only the conceptual muddles we can get into when these accumulations of meaning are ignored but the educational chaos that results from shifting unwittingly back and forth between the various frames of reference which such clusters of meaning supply. In fact, the term "aesthetic" has by this time been so badly mangled that I habitually treat it simply as a throw-away word when I employ it in discussions of the philosophy of art and art education. In this essay, it will be noted, I rarely if ever employ it.

prevailing jargon, "cognitive") meaning presumably do not arise. In all the arts, but perhaps most conspicuously in the case of the art of music, appreciation of their internal formal patterns of sound, volume, line, and color, involve powers of discrimination, anticipation, and recognition analogous to those involved in the conduct of any inquiry in theoretical science.

So much will doubtless be conceded by appreciative students of these arts who know intuitively that a Haydn quartet or a Beethoven concerto is inaccessible to those for whom all music is mood music and a classical recapitulation is nothing more than a second-go-round of the same old string of melodies. But I go further. For, as I now see, appreciation of what is meant, or intended, in works of art also constantly depends upon ways of "seeing the point" which have no close analogues in the case of apprehensions essential to scientific knowledge.

For example, the understanding of comedy requires, in its simplest form, the ability to see the point of a joke and hence that it is a joke. But jokes, although occasionally found in scientific writings and lectures, are not an essential part of what they are meant to communicate. Likewise, appreciation of a tragic drama requires that we appreciate the play as a tragedy, that is, as the awesome representation of a form of human misfortune. Such appreciations, however, have nothing to do with scientific understanding which concerns itself exclusively with correlatable rates of change in the occurrence of phenomena, including such curious phenomena as featherless bipeds. But we must now go a step further. For those who take a tragedy merely as an occasion for a good cry also miss its point as a work of tragic *art*. They recognize it as the account of a calamity which therefore involves persons and not merely things. And this is why they cry. But it still does not exist for them as a work of art.

Here we verge upon an insight which will be more fully developed in the sequel. At this stage it must suffice to observe that artistic appreciations always are concerned with what the artist is doing *in* bringing it into being. The artist's intentions in the act of creation, as I am now disposed to think, may well be something which is *sui generis*. And so, very likely, is our own discernment of his intentions in that act. As I read him, this point was first clearly perceived by Kant in his *Critique of Aesthetic Judgment*, where he makes the initially obscure distinction between "purposeful" and "purposive" activities and apprehensions. A purposeful activity, Kant tells us, is, and is properly taken to be, a means or condition of some ulterior end. Hence it could just as well be satisfied by any other line of action that did the job. To this extent, accordingly, the thing done or the means taken has

no individual actuality either for the artist or for ourselves. It acquires such an actuality only in so far as it is something done, and appreciated, as we say, for its own sake. This is why we are disposed to say, paradoxically, that it has no meaning, though, as a work of art, it is something which can only be understood in intentional terms. It is also why, no less paradoxically, its intention is not to accomplish or become something but simply to be something. Kant sought to resolve the paradox by saying that the work of art, whose characteristic interest is internal to the life of the individual work itself, is not purposeful but purposive. And for this reason, as he said, we can never form a general concept of its meaning as we always do in our scientific description and predictions of phenomena.

Here it is easy to be misled. For it is a logical commonplace that no individual thing, as such, is ever exhaustively defined in terms of the general properties ascribed to it. But for the scientist the uniqueness of an individual thing is of no interest; it concerns him only as an object of a certain sort which can be correlated with objects of other sorts. And even when, for the nonce, he happens to take an interest in it, and finds it engaging or even lovely, as in the case of a cloudy sky or a fall of snow, it still remains something inactive, inert, and incorrigible. A work of art on the other hand is never just a thing which happens on occasion to please or charm us. It is, and is appreciated as, something created and something done, whose design is the unique product of a particular series of human actions. And these actions, as we perceive, sometimes go awry even though we have no rule for judging just how the artist made his mistake or what might be done to rectify it.

A work of art is thus something both intelligible and corrigible. Yet its intention can never be fully grasped in terms of other things, either natural or human. Concepts apply to it, but only by analogy and never definitively. It represents a human face, even a particular face, yet it is not that face, nor was it meant to be. It bears likeness to natural phenomena, yet it is not a natural phenomenon, not even the most exquisite or appealing, and terms applied to the latter, provide merely a suggestive basis for its understanding. It is something done, but done to no purpose, and the purposes in terms of which we may attempt to triangulate it invariably fall wide of the mark. Yet it is in no sense an oddity or, in the vulgar sense, a miracle. It is something to which we all have access, though not perhaps in earliest childhood. Quite humanly but wonderfully, it is something which means something and not, like a rock or cloud merely is something; or better, its meanings, as they are revealed to us in our own active appreciations, *are* its being, and

it has no other. When we lose sight of this, as our whole contemporary philosophy of higher education impells us to do, a great part of the dignity and power of humanistic learning and teaching goes down the corrupting drains of the academic knowledge factory and service station.

I. On knowing and appreciating a work of art

But now we have to ask in some detail what that meaning and the modes of being it may contain actually come to. What are the terms and conditions of our knowledge of it? How and by what stages is that knowledge reached? And in what sense and to what extent can it be the product of human learning and teaching?

To take the last point first, it needs to be said that no matter how widely we may construe the concepts of knowing, learning, and teaching, there are some aspects of our experience to which those terms do not apply. Certain things simply happen to us. We are seized by pain; random sensations make their way into our fields of consciousness: unassignable pangs of uneasiness; flickering after-images; the whole flow and jetsam of what C. I. Lewis called "the primordial empirical given"; all this I take to be pre- or post cognitive. Furthermore, we may agree that there are forms of knowledge which do not involve teaching or even learning. Our only access to them, so to say, is inspirational. However, this serves to underscore the point that most forms of knowing and understanding are *achievements* and that the concept of an achievement does not apply to everything that falls within the range of consciousness.

Granting, then, that not all forms of experience are cognitive and that some things may perhaps be known that are not cognitive achievements, we still cannot profitably proceed to the question as to what must be learned for purposes of artistic understanding until we have first sorted out in a provisional way what in fact we have to know in appreciating works of art. To this end, as well as for the sake of concreteness, I propose henceforth to confine my remarks mainly to a classic example of visual art, about whose status as a work of art there is little question: namely, Giorgione's *The Tempest*.[3]

To start with, and at the least of it, we must recognize Giorgione's picture as a perceptual unity distinct from whatever else surrounds it in our field of vision. This is indispensible; but clearly it does not suffice by a wide margin. For one may observe perceptual unity and still not recognize it as a picture. In order to identify *The Tempest* as a picture and to determine what belongs to its pictorial unity, we must also perceive that certain things

that may appear on its surface—specks of dust, shadows cast by inadequate lighting in the room where it is hung, overcoats of varnish that create extrinsic high-lights, etc.—do not belong to it. Moreover, as a picture, *The Tempest* must be understood, not as a lovely thing, but as a human artifact, something done, for whatever purpose or reason, by a man or group of men. Recognition of this all-important fact still does not suffice, for we must also know that this picture is a painting which demands to be looked at in a way which is very different from the way in which we look at a billboard poster or an instructive illustration in a travel book. In short, we must know that this picture is to be treated by us as something to be appreciated, not necessarily without regard to, but at least without concern for, whatever ends it may serve for the artist, his patron, the society in which he lived, and above all ourselves.

Here, however, we approach a problem of some delicacy which those who stress, as I have done, the difference between purposive and merely purposeful activities in the arts, do not always appreciate. Perhaps the first philosopher to consider it with some care was David Hume, who pointed out that our awareness of the utility of an artifact may have something to do with its beauty. What Hume had in mind (as I understand him) is the fact that our appreciations of a work of architecture, for example, are not diminished, or necessarily distracted, by our knowledge of its characteristic functions as a building. On the contrary, our perception of the distinctive beauty of a house requires both that we recognize it as a house and not a temple or town hall and that we perceive its suitability to its appropriate architectural purposes. What makes this possible is, on the one side, our own freedom from immediate practical preoccupations with the house and, on the other, our imaginative delight in observing the fineness with which it serves its appointed human ends.

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[2] My reasons for choosing this work are several. First, I myself am greatly enamoured of it. Second, it is well known, and its artistic distinction is not in dispute. Third, its interest and many of its levels of significance, though complex, are fairly stable; hence my reading of it will probably be accepted as typical. Fourth, it contains margins of ambiguity so that what it means and is are probably not accessible immediately even to persons of considerable sensibility. And fifth, it is a transitional work whose meanings and values are, for most of us, somewhat unstable: one knows it to be a distinguished work of art; one realizes very quickly its wide range and complexities of interest; but even after much study, it remains in certain ways problematic, so that some important questions of meaning and value remain, even for sophisticated observers.

It will be unnecessary to add that I approach this wonderful picture with fear and trembling, as a "lay reader" and not as a learned art historian.

The same holds, in analogous ways, of other works of art, including paintings. Our sympathetic sense of the decorative, instructive, or religious roles that are so beautifully served by a first-rate Renaissance painting is in no sense a distraction from our appreciation of its artistic value. In fact, it converts their incarnations in the noble work into indispensable aspects of its own complex artistic design and meaning. To be sure this conversion will not occur, without subtle shifts in the psychological frames that directly return us to the picture itself as something which, as St. Thomas puts it, pleases when seen.[4] But what is seen and the manner of the seeing are immensely expanded by our awareness of its human functions in ways that the uninitiated observer would not understand and could not foretell.

But this is to anticipate. Let us, for the moment, approach Giorgione's *Tempest* more simplistically. A man from the moon, unacquainted with the forms of life, including especially human life, on earth, would probably not recognize the simplest representational forms which immediately press themselves upon our attention when we ourselves look at the picture. For us, however, this picture is unmistakably a landscape full of a variety of figures, natural and human, which we recognize and are meant to recognize as likenesses of things we encounter in everyday life. These likenesses do not for a moment deceive us. We view them, and are meant to view them, only as likenesses no matter how true they may be to their originals. On the other hand, we do not regard them as vehicles of possible information about a certain landscape or type of landscape in northern Italy, with its characteristic contours, types of vegetation, houses, modes of apparel, and so on. This learning, by hypothesis, we *must already possess*. But here it lies exclusively at the disposal of the painting itself. And learning this is an achievement of no little difficulty in its own right. For it entails that one knows at once how to arrest one's attention so that the informative use of these forms never becomes dominant and to redirect one's attention to their interrelations to one another within the painting.

Yet, anyone who knew this much would still, by no means, appreciate Giorgione's picture as a visual composition. What else is wanted? Well, one must appreciate also the qualities and relations to one another of line and color, of light and shade, above all the points of stress or emphasis, the organizing factors which bring into proper focus the other recessive or

[4] The word "see" here is of course employed in an extended sense which included but is not confined to narrowly visual apprehensions.

subordinate visual qualities of the painting as a distinctive artistic unity. But in *The Tempest* (and this is one of its virtues) such visual elements are never apprehended in isolation from the representational forms. Its composition is, so to say, a cohesive visual-representational design in which other visual elements continually interact with and qualify its representative forms. Our appreciation of *The Tempest,* therefore, cannot merely be a matter of attending to the representational and the sensory forms discursively, as it were, side by side. The painter forcibly demands that we perceive how they continually mutually inflect one another: light and shadow setting off the natural forms that comprise the landscape, or on the other side, the placement of mother and child in such a way as to reinforce the linear relations and to draw attention to color relationships which otherwise might not be noticed or else would be seen in an altogether different way. For example, the color of the mother's garment is seen as the color of a garment, and this in its own way affects the felt quality of the color itself. And, in a word, visual relations that might otherwise be incongruous or even repugnant to one another acquire a quite different perceptual quality when apprehended in their characteristic representational contexts.

But one might perceive all this yet still miss levels of significance without which the work would lose much of its distinction and power as a painting. Here let me resort to a weary word which is used here simply as a throw-away term: "expression." Both the representational and the visual forms, in their various combinations, serve at once to express or articulate certain ranges of emotions, feelings, and, not least, moods. The stormy sky, with its deep contrasting perspectives, introduces into the picture a dramatic element which threatens the repose of the lower part of the picture, thereby distinguishing it sharply from many other Renaissance paintings of similar scenes by, say, Perugino or Raphael. At the same time, this drama is qualified by the profound stability of the landscape with its nearby houses and other domestic artifacts, and above all by the protective presence of the young man standing quietly in the lower left-hand corner of the picture. This, as we realize, is not vaguely like one of Turner's tempests in which the very presence of a floundering ship merely underscores the interplay of elemental natural forces. What we recognize here, evidently, is a version, or semi-version, of the pastoral.

The very word "pastoral" calls attention to another characteristic feature of many works of art some knowledge of which is required for their full appreciation. This is the factor of genre. As a version of the pastoral, Giorgione's painting thereby establishes its place within an ancient artistic

tradition whose conventions provide an inclusive rationale for much that we see and feel in the picture. Our awareness of it reinforces and gives point and focus to our happy sense of artifice, cultivation, and even learning. And at the same time the mental sets which it imposes save us from misadventures in our effort to understand why certain otherwise irrelevant objects are included in the picture and why its curious blandness (if that is the word) is in no sense to be regarded as a fault.

In art, however, we must also realize that the genre, with its conventions, is encompassed by the work and not it by them. Accordingly, there are aspects of Giorgione's *Tempest* which, as we should not be surprised to find, are not easily comprehended in terms of the genre of the pastoral. To begin with, the lower landscape impresses one less as a semi-rural retreat, than as a private park which is virtually an extension of someone's property in the nearby town. For reasons mentioned in the next paragraph, the mother seems to be sitting with her nursing infant, if not on her own land, then on the land owned by some friendly *padrone* in whose house she can find, for the time being at least, a home. Thus, as we see them in relation to one another, all elements in the picture reinforce a deep sense, not simply of natural affection and compassion and peace, but of profoundly urban civility.[5] Every stroke of the brush, as it were, converts the whole imaginative world of the picture into a mode, not merely of human action, but of civilized and indeed civil human life and living.

This, of course, is a hallmark of much Venetian art: its continued expressive reminders of transforming domestic virtues of *la città*, the city. Here as in the works of Titian and Veronese, the city becomes as it were an encompassing element or substance, which offers nourishment and hospitality to anyone who enters its precincts. And Giorgione, no less than Titian, never lets us forget this fact.

But there is another, more important reason why *The Tempest* cannot be comfortably viewed as a version of the pastoral. This at once concerns its subject matter and the peculiar force and intensity of its treatment in the painting. As a Renaissance painting, which contains a mother, child, and attentive young man, *The Tempest* preserves, and trades on, a vestigial awareness of the iconographic meanings characteristic of religious pictures of the Madonna and Child and, perhaps in this instance, even of the Flight into Egypt. But this quality of Giorgione's art creates its own fascinating

[5] The pleonasm here is quite deliberate. It is intended to make certain that "civility" is here used in a nonmetaphorical sense.

uneasiness and tension. For *The Tempest* is probably not meant to be viewed as a distinctively Christian painting, as are the Madonnas of Bellini, not to mention those of Fra Angelico or Giotto. And the fact is suggested by the picture's title, which is not "Madonna with Child" or "Flight into Egypt" but "The Tempest." Here, briefly, Giorgione is breaking out of one tradition which is called Christian into another which (misleadingly) is called humanistic. This is not so much a Mary with the Infant Jesus as simply a mother with suckling child; this is not so much a conceivable Joseph as an amiable young man who offers them protection against the elements. But the ambiguity remains; nor would we understand it without a knowledge of the religio-artistic traditions against which, as well as half-within which, Giorgione is working.

At all events, to call this a secular painting is to misconceive it, at least if the word "secular" is taken to connote "irreligious" or even "nonreligious." For *The Tempest*, no less than the great works of Rembrandt, is indeed a religious painting whose intensity the word "humanistic" does not convey. In this picture, the lady and her child, whether formally strangers or members of the town, are at home and at rest; nothing disturbs, or can disturb, their inner tranquility. They are not merely *at* home, as we say, but home. Perception of this fact transmutes the entire painting in a way that is peculiar to Giorgione among Venetian painters. And this is why we speak of his paintings not only as marvellously and magically lyrical but also as profound and inexhaustible. For there is embodied in them, as in *The Tempest*, those feelings of wonder, mystery, and exaltation, which are the benchmarks of that dimension of being known among religious writers as transcendence.[6]

II. Learning and teaching

From this inadequate synopsis of what needs to be known in and for appreciating the various levels of significance in a great work of visual art, let us now turn to problems of appropriate learning and teaching in the arts. Heretofore I have argued that before we can even begin to understand these levels as levels of artistic *value* in a particular work like *The Tempest*, we must already know, and be able to identify and to determine, what a work of art is and what are the conditions of its appreciation. These aspects of our knowledge are immensely complex; nor can we suppose that the operations

[6] Here, as throughout this discussion, I am much indebted to the acute comments of my wife, Helen R. Aiken, who, as always, is so much better a teacher than I am a learner.

involved in framing and identifying a work of art can be performed without previous experience. Making full allowance for the fact that there occur moments of insight in our fulfilled apprehensions of a particular work, which come to us as gifts of the gods, such insights do not come to those who are unprepared. And preparation is a matter of learning, however difficult in many instances it may be to identify and to describe. Thus, for example, we learn by stages not only to identify material objects in accordance with some general principle of classification, we also learn the vital difference between a material object and an artifact. Having learned this, we learn also to distinguish among kinds of artifacts: what their distinctive purposes may be and how they serve their respective functions. Then we learn how to distinguish those intentions of an artist that may be realized directly in the productive actions themselves. For until we know this, we haven't yet come in sight of the artistic significance of any work of the human mind.

Plainly, we cannot succeed in the performance of these complex mental operations, in particular instances, if we come to them open-handed, out of a nondescript experience. For we must have learned in a systematic way the vital categorical distinctions between treating something as an object and treating it as an artifact, and, secondly, between treating it as an artifact that is to be used for some ulterior end and treating it as something, not purposeful but purposive, something whose artistic virtue is understood in the successive acts we perform in contemplating its own internal design.[7]

Little children, I have found, learn quite early to make many of these distinctions in a rudimentary way. But they do so gradually and playfully, partly by imitating their elders and partly from one another. And though it

[7] Fundamentally I am convinced that these categorical distinctions of intention are acquired in the very process of learning how to use a developed "natural language." I am prepared to accept Professor Chomsky's theory that this learning is a form of maturation which depends upon powers of expression and understanding inherent in the human mind. Even so, maturations of this sort need to be elicited and prompted. The maturations of the sexual impulse are inevitable, and, as it sometimes seems, incorrigible. Those involved in learning a language are not. Furthermore, they may be confused and corrupted by metalinguistic theories, or ideologies, which overlay and overcast them with principles of interpretation and misinterpretation. Thus we not only learn in some sense how to use a word and how to construe its intention in particular cases; we also acquire by processes of contextual imitation ideas about their uses and intentions, which can block or frustrate our more natural ways of construing them. Interpretation, in short, is an inescapable adjunct of thought and discourse. And habits of interpretation frequently have to be unlearned if we are truly to perceive what is actually meant and said.

is true, as I believe, that play itself is an instinctual form of behavior, knowing when to play and when not to, how to play a game or play it well, are not things we do by instinct. Still less, do we instinctively realize when others are playing and when they are in earnest. My point here, however, is not that learning to treat something as a work of art is so much a matter of learning when someone else happens to be acting playfully (although there is certainly an important core of truth in the play theory of art, just as there is also in the theory of art as mimicry or imitation); rather it is that what we apprehend in coming to recognize things as works of art, is the result of learning how to recognize something as done in a semiplayful spirit and, accordingly, when it is appropriate to treat it in a like manner.

The reason why I have used the phrase "semiplayful" in the preceding sentence is not, let me add, to hedge my bets. Rather is it to reinforce the point that learning what a work of art is, and hence to treat it as such, is a complex process which, as we will see more fully below, involves a variety of interacting and interqualifying skills and powers of transference. Thus we do learn by stages that actors in a play are not merely playing, or rather not literally playing, in the way gamesmen do, by learning at last that they are not involved in scoring a point or beating an opponent. And we are helped in this by learning to attend more closely to their gestures, verbal and otherwise, and, in the process to permit our ordinary empathic responses to have their way—up to a point. In short, we learn to *combine* our understanding of play with our developing understanding of the powers of imitation in order to perceive expressive values without responding to them in an everyday purposeful way. At bottom, I am convinced, we are mainly aided in this process of transference by learning the nonliteral, figurative sense of words, and especially the use of metaphor. For metaphor, more than any other trope, serves at once to transfer the meanings of expressions beyond their customary ranges of application and to rivet our attention to the object to which they are so strongly and strikingly applied. In another way the metaphor, which is no ordinary analogy introduced for the sake of a new line of inquiry, simply invests the object itself with a new *being*. Metaphorical utterance, in the normal course, is quite useless. And we see its seemingly absurd point only when we see that it is there for the sake of what it reveals to us. This, I am persuaded, is why Aristotle said that metaphor is the soul of poetry. In a larger sense, indeed, the whole poem is an extended metaphor.[8]

But now we have to ask whether, and to what extent, it is possible to teach what is involved in recognizing something as a work of art (that is,

as something to be responded to in the manner appropriate to such a work.) For it is by no means self-evident that wherever there is a learner there may also be a teacher. Especially in the case of natural languages, most learning is informal, and many things are learned from teachers that they do not intend us to learn. All the same, it seems clear that at least part of what we learn, particularly as we become more sophisticated in our responses to works of art, can be and is taught, often in a quite deliberate manner, with the use of skills, linguistic and otherwise, that have already been learned.[9] For example, young children are commonly taught by their parents to recognize in many situations that works of a certain sort, about which the child is easily misled, are *to be* accepted as forms of play and art. Implicit in this teaching are also rudimentary forms of instruction about certain archetypal genres. For example, the child is taught, not only that a certain narrative is a story, but also that it is a fairy tale or fantasy. Again, he is taught not just to treat a play merely as a play; he is also prompted to view it as a whole, as something comic and laughable, or else as something essentially serious which is therefore to be taken in a quite different way. And because the child often laughs when laughter is inappropriate, he is brought by stages to see that in this sphere as in others he (like the artist) can make mistakes. In short, he begins now to learn the important lesson that there exists a vital difference between free play or fantasy and art, the application of which involves a certain discipline, with respect to which his own unprompted responses are corrigible and hence subject to modification and control.

Here, also, we may see in another way how the significance of genres is so commonly misunderstood both by the teacher and his student. Genres do not impose, either upon the artist or upon his audience, set types or formulas which must be strictly obeyed mechanically in all situations. Art, as we gradually apprehend, belongs to the domain of subjective life, as Kierkegaard calls it, which is free in a way that the exact sciences are not meant to be. Yet the subjective life is not unstructured, not a mere rag bag of charms and oddities to be taken by the observer simply as he will. It requires that the subject relate himself to the work and achievement of his

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[8] The analogues of metaphor in the other arts are the subject of an entire book which cannot be gone into here. One instance must suffice. In a piece of music, the introduction of a theme in a new key and instrumentation presents us not simply with a mere likeness or simulation of the theme, but a transmutation of it into something quite new and strange. It *reveals* the theme in a new way which at the same time is and is not the theme, but something in itself, wholly fresh and unprecedented.

[9] Here my remarks about play, imitation, and metaphor provide cases in point.

fellows with respect for their intentions, for he can miss a point vital to his own subjective life if he simply follows his own passing inclinations and tastes.

In sum, the complex, yet indispensible preparations for appreciating works of art involve a great deal of prior integrated learning and instruction, much of it quite deliberate. Thus (to return to our example) the process of readying oneself for appreciating Giorgione's *Tempest* requires the antecedent informing of many powers of perception acquired by many stages and in many devious ways. Some of these will be further elaborated upon as we proceed now to give some account of the forms of learning and teaching required for appreciating the work which here is serving as the primary vehicle for our discussion.

In this instance, I have deliberately chosen a work of representational art as an exemplum, not only because it contains levels of significance which may be absent from nonrepresentative art, but precisely because in a work of this type, the representative level is apt to be the first which the ordinary person is able to make contact with as a work of art. Only very gradually do we learn to attend closely to the less obvious interests in patterns of color and line and to their interactive relations to the representational form themselves.

The perceptions of the representative forms in a painting depend, of course, upon prior experience of their likenesses in ordinary life. And the initial recognition of these likenesses, in many instances, occurs without formal instruction. In Giorgione's *Tempest*, most of us identify at once the mother and her nursing child, and the young man in the left hand corner, then we notice the landscape of rocks, shrubs, and framing trees, the canal, the comforting background of houses receding into the distance, as well as the tempestuous sky. Other things in the painting, the little boats, the part of the mother's garment lying behind her on the grass, the precise position of her legs, we observe only by stages. Because they are stylized or abstractly represented, we may in fact not see them at all until they are pointed out by a patient guide. Above all we may fail, within the context of the picture itself, to see things the human figures are doing, *how* they are disposed toward each other, what are the functions of artifacts like the stone, the boats, or the bridge. Thus, without a guide or teacher we may fail to see that the young man is a friendly observer-protector, that the mother is sitting quietly, gazing beyond any objects in the picture as if contemplating things to come. We may fail also to notice that the path and the bridge provide access to the nearby houses which could be reached immediately if the

mother and her baby were in real danger of a drenching from the distant storm.

But just now we come in sight of a dimension of the work which can only be gradually learned through accumulated experience of other works in its own tradition: the general manner in which representations are stylized and the characteristic reasons for this. Nor will all this be fully appreciated unless we perceive it imaginatively against the contrasting background of other, earlier styles of representations in the longer tradition of Italian medieval or Renaissance painting. Here there is space for mention of only one or two such factors. From one point of view, Giorgione, like Bellini before him, is a greater realist than say Giotto, whose linear landscapes are unconcerned with the purely visual values of perspective, and whose figures, themselves often highly abstract, are represented without regard to their natural relations of size. The interest and power of Giotto's landscapes, whose colors have a primarily symbolic and decorative significance, are directed especially to the stimulation of our sense of the tactile values, as Berenson calls them, of the objects in his paintings. Giotto seems scarcely to care how things simply look, but only how they might feel to a hand that caressed them. Like most Venetians, Giorgione is less a draftsman than a painter.[10] He wants, among other things, to open our eyes, to make us see more vividly how things look at a certain distance in their characteristic lights and shadows and colors in relation to other objects in the pictorial space. And to this end, his treatment of distant objects is perforce vaguer than that of someone like Giotto or even Bellini. Where Giotto's abstract trees seem almost to be iconographic emblems, Giorgione's, although less sharply outlined, appear immutably as trees in fact look at a certain distance. Moreover, whereas Giotto paints all his objects in his pictures in much the same degree of detail and clarity of outline, Giorgione sets in powerful contrast to the impressionistic background the more sharply focused figures of the mother and child, with her garments, her bodily position, and above all, the visual-tactile quality of her lovely flesh. In his own way Giorgione, too, gives us a powerful sense of tactile values; but because they are not dispersed evenly throughout the picture, they are stressed all the more dramatically as felt qualities of the human figures in the foreground.

In short, even when we restrict attention to the sheer matter of under-

[10] This statement is qualified below. For Giorgione, when it suits his purpose, is also a superb draftsman.

standing what Giorgione is up to in his complex and varied treatment of representational forms, we are compelled to see them in their contrasting imaginal relations to the manner in which such forms are handled by other painters in the traditions within, as well as against, which he worked. But the artistic value of these relations cannot be learned directly by such abstract descriptions and explanations as I have outlined in the preceding remarks, but, only with their help, by continual redirections of our eyes and minds to ways in which objects are presented in the picture itself. Our talk, descriptive and explanatory, can be useful, often even indispensible; but it must be supplemented in practice by sequences of instructed gestures which serve in effect as so many demonstratives. And these demonstratives do their own work only insofar as they in turn reinforce our attention to the salient stylistic similarities and differences which we are meant to hold in mind in looking at Giorgione's painting, and which, when we learn to do so, add so much to our appreciation of the painter's art.

Full understanding of representational forms in a painting thus requires not only a heritage of common experience of the corresponding natural forms as seen in ordinary life, which are for the most part learned and taught informally; nor, in addition, does it require merely powers of recognition which enable us to distinguish physical objects from human persons and their artifacts. It requires, further, that we learn, through informed experience of relevant artistic traditions the specific quality of the treatment of representational forms by a particular artist in a particular work. For most of us, however, this learning is gradually acquired and it relevance established only with the help of a skilled teacher's explanations, descriptions, demonstrations, and gesturings, with the all important aid of slides and recurring visits to galleries of art.

But, as we have seen, *The Tempest* is not simply a learned and sophisticated arrangement of representational forms. Just as the movements of words in *Lycidas* or *Ash Wednesday* carry with them a powerful beat and surge of sound, so in Giorgione's masterpiece, the representational forms are wondrously invested in all the qualities and dimensions of distinctively visual perception. Like his compatriots, Giorgione is a splendid colorist, and he deploys in extraordinary ways all the various dimensions of color. But unlike Gauguin, he is never a mere colorist. He seems almost to be in love with space, of which he makes us aware through complex organizations and counterpoints of line and shape, of mass, volume, and perspective. Above all, he is a master of illumination, of light and shade, of sunny clarity and deepening shadow and obscurity. These visual qualities and relations are never

presented as random miscellanies of "sense data" or "aesthetic surfaces." They pull and haul, press forward and recede, glance and glitter, divide and return, tense and relax, threaten and recompose within a moving and expressive composition.

How do we achieve this distinctive visual understanding and knowledge? The ways are many, and there is space here for schematic mention of a few. Our original discriminations of such relatively abstract sensory and spatial properties are of course automatically learned in the process of our developing differentiations of material objects. In the normal course, however, we regard them merely as characteristic and identifiable features of such objects: we don't see *them*, but the object through them. Something else is required to bring them forward as qualities and relations interesting in their own right.

We come to this understanding in two characteristic ways. In the first place, the artist himself, by his own powerful example, helps to teach us the difficult lesson of exercising our sensory and visual faculties without concern for the portents of good or evil that lie at the basis of most classifications of things in common life. But even Giorgione could scarcely accomplish this unaided. He belongs to a great line of artists who have already taught us, in countless encounters with their works simply to look and see rather than to identify, classify, and appraise in accordance with our workaday preoccupations. Cimabue and Giotto, for example, have already made us see the power or line and shape and the tactile values which are tied to them; from Piero della Francesca we learn the values of perspective and the monumental impassivity of things, abstracted for the moment not only from their ordinary representational meanings, but also from the other visual interests of line, shape, and color that may be embodied in them; we learn from Perugino the significance of space and air, from Michelangelo the vitality of bodily movement, of force, pressure, and impending change; and we learn from Giorgione's own predecessors and contemporaries, from Bellini, Titian, and Veronese, the fascination of color, light and shadow, and the delightful decorative uses to which they may be put. Some teach in one way, others in another: some by way of contrast, others by similarity and variation.

Nor are we limited for teachers to the artist's predecessors. Rembrandt, Delacroix, Renoir, Cézanne, and Matisse serve, when we return to Giorgione, to illuminate his own vision in their own characteristic and distinctive ways. Had I the skill and sensitivity, I have no doubt that I could prove the use of a Pollock or a de Kooning in teaching us what to look for in

the immanent abstract expressiveness of Giorgione's treatment of color and line.

But these remarks are overwrought. They suggest that "the artist" is a creature apart, set off from the ruck of ordinary and obscure Judes who, imperfect artists themselves, still have that impulse which helps us to see qualities of visual perception under the form of art. The fact is that before we ever come near a Giotto, a Piero, or a Giorgione, a thousand lesser artists, both creative and recreative, have already taught us something about the values of line and color, of shape, perspective, and materiality. And just as the great artist is himself an apprentice who must learn his craft before he can be a master, so also for the appreciation of his art he needs many auxilliaries and associates some of whom also possess the gift of tongues. For the artist as such is mute and teaches only by his example. And whether he likes it or not, knowledge of his art depends also upon those interpreters who know how to deploy the resources of language in order to make us see what he may be up to in his treatments of space, light, and air.

Here indeed one is tempted to say that in learning to appreciate not only the representational but even the more abstract and sensory forms of art, language itself is the primary teacher. More properly, in learning how to use and apply such words as "graceful," "lovely," "charming," and "garish," we are automatically taught to "bracket" the thing seen and to view it not for what it may signify in some practical or scientific scheme of things, but simply as something to be looked at. But these "aesthetic concepts" or terms, as Professor Frank Sibley calls them, have been badly overworked and misused by advertisers and other sensationalists.[11] They may arrest attention, but they reveal little. And what they do reveal reduces the thing seen to the level of a million other "beauties" about which there is no need, or time, either to instruct us or to praise. The man of words does far better, in the normal course, to stretch the

[11] See "Aesthetic Concepts", by Frank Sibley, republished in *Philosophy Looks at The Arts*, edited by Joseph Margolis, Charles Scribner and Sons, 1962, pp. 63-87. I have my doubts about some of the details of Professor Sibley's account of these expressions. Nor am I impressed as he is by their importance in critical discourse. Moreover, his interest, unlike mine, is not directed primarily to the use of language in describing works of art but to the whole range of what he calls "aesthetic discrimination and appreciation", a domain whose boundaries seem to be exceedingly tenuous indeed. Nevertheless, Sibley's essay is an interesting application of Wittgenstein's important contribution to our understanding of ordinary language, and it contains many remarks which corroborate things said here and elsewhere in this paper.

applications of such commonplace factual adjectives as "cold," "flat," and "dry," which, in unusual circumstances, acquire the power to rivet our attention to the perceptual qualities to which they refer. He does still better to make figurative use especially of verbs of action and their participial and other adjectival derivatives which, unlike vague "aesthetic" terms like "handsome," and "comely," call specific attention to the "energy," "efforts," and "powers" displayed in a painter's "thrusting" line, his "shifting" colors, his "broken" forms and "pressing" masses.

In talking about works of art, we have all been misled, I think, by the easy use of aesthetic terms which call our attention equally well to the "delightful" colors of a sunset as to the painter's deployment of them in a picture. Anyone can be charmed by a "pretty" sky, but the lines, volumes, and luminosities which are present to us in a painting belong to an artistic composition whose controlled, intentional values move us in an entirely different way. We have also been badly misled by the blanket use of the word "contemplation," which better serves to describe our inactive ruminative gazing at the sea than our involved scrutiny of the perspectives and masses of a pictorial design. Giorgione demands that we be affected by his handling of colors, and moved by his shifts from impressionistic backgrounds to sharply defined lines of the figures in the foregrounds of his paintings. For him the purely "aesthetic" pleasures of the musing eye are always transformed and transmuted into expressive understandings of a painter's enlivening brush and mind. In art, mind is all. And where mind is, intention is. Nature lets us do with it as we will; the artist does not. Where we see the colorist's composition or the organization of a draftsman's lines and shapes, it is the artist who not only establishes the vehicle but sets the tenor for what we are meant to see and feel.

Here the teacher has a subtle and difficult task. He must do and undo; speak and then alter the meaning of what he has said in trying to make us see and feel what he himself understands. In order to lead, he cannot avoid the risk of misleading. In *The Tempest* he must call attention to the fluctuating red of the young man's jacket, the green on deepening brown of the rocky earth beneath the half-reposing lady and her nursing baby. He must make us see the shadows and the lights as ways of bringing into relation all the pictorial forms present in the painting. But he cannot leave us with these enhanced perceptions. He must make us see them as dimensions of a multidimensional picture whose whole substance continually returns to the individual parts its own encompassing creative force and energy. And only for a moment, and always with a view to returning us to their values within

larger compositions of the picture, can he pause to talk about the hues of the mother's skin or the bright surface of the broken pedestal in the foreground.

Moreover, the teacher will badly fail both Giorgione and ourselves if he leaves us with only a more vivid awareness of the rich sensory and pictorial values of *The Tempest*. He must forever recall to us the fact that the lights and colors of the sky are qualities of that *sky*, that the lacy figures of the enclosing trees are indeed to be seen as *trees* and not as mere abstract decorations and draperies, and that the flesh tints of the mother's skin are meant as revelations of her bodily and human presence. And, again, the special freshness and fragrance of all these wonderful visions will be still lost upon us unless the teacher disposes us ever and again to see them together as so many interacting perceptual and imaginal movements of an inimitable artistic concert.

But, of course, there are concerts and concerts. There are certain fugues of Bach, for example, whose intricate designs, however interesting in themselves, remain almost totally inexpressive. Their patterns of sound intrigue the ear and the mind, but, nevertheless, as we say, they "leave us cold" or "unmoved." This does not necessarily mean that they are therefore defective or imperfect; it means only that the range of their artistic interest is limited. Indeed the interest of many obviously expressive works by Sibelius or Tchaikowsky is all too easily exhausted at a single hearing. On the other hand, in many of Bach's lesser works the formal counterpoint ever and again revives our attention. In the greater works of Bach, we find an energy, a ceremonial seriousness, a gaiety, pathos, and exaltation, which are profoundly and wonderfully moving. And the same is true of Giorgione's painting. Bach and Giorgione, in their very different ways, can bring us again and again to the point of tears, as (for me at least) Vivaldi and the lesser Venetian masters such as the father and brother of Giovanni Bellini almost never can.

Here we are confronted once more with another basic dimension of most great art which I have referred to under the heading of "expression." And just as the teacher can improve our understanding of the other aspects of a work of art, so also he can aid us in the appreciation of its expressive values. Here, I shall take my examples from the writings of distinguished critics whose command of the artifices of language are so beautifully matched by their capacities for imaginative identification and feeling. For example, in describing Michelangelo's nudes which "so increase our sense of capacity," Berenson tells us how their "manliness, robustness, effectiveness," fulfills "our dream of a great soul inhabiting a beautiful body" and how in the

Sistine Chapel Michelangelo creates "the type of man best suited to subdue" and control the earth and who knows! perhaps more than the earth." He is helping in his hyperbolic way to expand our awareness of the Promethean expressiveness of Michelangelo's extraordinary art. When Nietzsche, more succinctly, refers to the "golden seriousness" of Mozart's music, he defines precisely the very being of the great E-flat major symphony and the haunting Clarinet Quintet. And when D. F. Tovey speaks of "the longing for the solo instrument" which is established in the opening ritornellos of Mozart's incomparable concertos, he makes us understand how different are the dramatic values of these works from those of the romantic concertos of Schumann and Mendelssohn. Finally, when T. S. Eliot refers to the "tough reasonableness concealed beneath a slight lyric grace" in the poetry of Andrew Marvell, we are brought summarily to an exact awareness of the unique and elusive expressive power of Marvell's best works.

It is not for nothing that all of these critics, with the possible exception of Berenson, are also men of art. Indeed Berenson himself, like Pater, may perhaps qualify as a symbiotic artist whose consuming passion to articulate what he perceives in the works of artists working in a wholly different medium, converts him, at moments, into an interesting writer on his own account. As artists, these writers are completely unafraid of exposing the feelings and emotions which, as Santayana put it before Eliot, they find "objectified in the work of art." Moved, they in turn seek to move, and in moving us, by their choice of words, they reveal expressive meanings about which most of us are too inhibited to speak, if indeed we are aware of them at all.

But the great critic, who usually interests us as a writer on his own account, is likely to be, for that very reason, an imperfect teacher. As often as not, he reveals as much about his own character, taste, and art as he does of the works about which he writes. The great critic is also likely to be more preoccupied with judgment than with analysis. And though judgment is indispensable to appreciation and *hence* to teaching, it exists in the sphere of art education never as an end but as a means to something beyond itself. Too often, moreover, the critic's "reasons" are tendered as evidences of *his* judgment and taste, rather than as remarks intended only to bring us back to the art work itself.

The teacher's discipline and art are stricter, more austere. For his concern is exclusively to bring his students closer to the distinctive being of works of art. His stern and self-effacing task is not, like that of the great critic, simply to call attention to individual strokes of genius or, like the learned

art historian, sociologist, or psychologist, to develop or illustrate a general theory of the place of art in large movements of culture or the significance of an artist's work as a manifestation of his personality. Making continent use of all these sources of understanding, for what they may be worth, his whole vocation is to bring his students to fuller awareness of the continuous evidences in works of art of the creative life which comprises one primary level of every man's own subjective being or actuality.

No teacher can make this understood by his talk alone. And his explanations and descriptions, left to themselves, remain abstract "literary" remarks until he ties them back into the picture itself with the help of bodily gesturing and grimacings by which the inert student is at last forced to notice, and in noticing is moved by, the complex palpable reality of the painting, poem, or sonata. Quite literally the teacher must himself become an actor of sorts, or, if you will, an interpretive artist who compels the student to see the picture, not as a sensitive connoisseur, voyeur, or mere man of judgment might, as a fateful action in which the observer himself for the time being is meant to become wholly involved. In their own ways, teachers are at once performers, actors, and reactors, and it is only as they act and react that anything happens to the student that results in artistic understanding. The teacher is thus more and less than a scholar, just as he is less and more than a creative artist. In his own way, the scholar does something and knows something, but its artistic relevance remains problematic. He scarcely knows whereof he speaks. It is for the teacher to put the scholar's knowledge to work and to establish its power to illuminate for the student some artistic quality of a picture, novel, or building. The good teacher is always learned; but he never intrudes his learning upon his students. He never drops names or drones on in knowledgeable—and meaningless—recitations of facts. On the contrary, he seeks always to avoid coming between the student and the artist, and on occasion, therefore, simply prefers to stand aside and let the artist teach his own lesson. In short, the teacher's only function is to bring the other two together in ways they might not be able to do on their own. And the degree to which he succeeds in this taxing enterprise is the sole measure of his achievement.

For the teacher as for the student of the arts, it is also the continuing effort to discern the artist's intention *in* his work which distinguishes him from the talkative purveyor of "aesthetic" charms. In this effort he finds his true discipline, his work, and which is the mark of every form of teaching and learning, his honorable corrigibility. By some perverse irony, many critics, especially old "new critics," treat the artist's intentions as irrelevant

aspects of a private soliloquy and the so-called "aesthetic surface" of the work as its only discussable aspect. Just the reverse is true. "Aesthetic surface" in fact is a piece of historical-philosophical flim-flam whose very meaning shifts from critic to critic and from philosopher to philosopher. And disagreements about what is "there" aesthetically invariably wind up as unresolvable disputes about the meanings of a word. But the intentions of the artist, like those of the teacher and the student, belong to the public domain. And we learn what his intentions are, just as we learn about anyone else's, by his actions, by his performances, by his achievements and his failures. And the knowledge we acquire of his intentions, in many direct and indirect ways, is never complete and always fallible. Beautifully, however, there always are his works to return to, as well as works of other artists, whose own related designs, with their varied and contrasting meanings, and their correlated successes and failures, provide clues to the controlling form of the artist's actions and intentions in *this* individual composition. And just as the all-important intentions of someone accused of murder in a court of law are established by processes of examination and cross-examination, by skillful interpretation of analogies and precedents, and, finally, by that cumulative sense of judgment which it takes a lifetime to acquire, so the intentions of the artist in any work are established by many stages and in many degrees.

But the murderer's action is purposeful, whereas that of the artist, as Kant says, is only purposive. And this is what creates the teacher's peculiar problem. For he cannot resort to analogies taken from common life which reveal intentions that are merely purposeful, and which are established as in a law court, only for the sake of further purposeful judgments and actions. The judge's task is to render justice, and justice imposes possibilities of punishment, retribution, and atonement. The art teacher's task, however, is only to inform and enhance awareness of a significant composition or design. And neither he, his student, nor the work of art has anything to gain (or lose) from his effort but an increment of being and (in the fine old-fashioned sense of the term) truth.

The work of art is not a practical achievement, though it may cost the artist, his student, and interpreter much sweat and many tears to bring it into being. Still less, one must never tire of saying, can it be identified with the physical object which provides its material ground. Its actuality consists, accordingly, of a network of uniquely moving possibilities which, to the disciplined and imaginative observer are as indelibly present in it as its pigment or frame. But these possibilities must be selected from a multitude of

impressions, many of which we are obliged to discard, precisely because they lead us away from actualities of form and meaning to which the work of art itself compels us, over and over again, to return.

III. A return to Kant

But how shall we know which possibilities are real and what interpretations that purport to establish them, are true? It is by facing this question, I believe, that we come finally in sight of the point, as well as the limitations of all our explanations and interpolations, our scholarly excursions, our emphases and silences, in our efforts to teach something that can lead us more deeply into a work of art. The answer to the question, in an age of methodolatry, may seem initially deflationary and dispiriting. For I am bound to say with all possible emphasis, that here, as in all the humanities, there is no science, no certain method or criterion, no "objective" or non-personal routine for testing what is really there, and hence what is finally relevant in our apprehensions and hence in our interpretations of a work of art. And this, I am convinced, is the penultimate lesson of education in the arts. The ultimate lesson, however, is that this is not an evidence of failure, either for ourselves or for the humanities. Rather is it a sign of their unique importance within the realms of spirit.

In a remarkable statement in his *Critique in Judgment*, Kant puts the point in the following way:

> ". . . genius is a *talent* for producing that for which no definite rule can be given; it is not a mere aptitude for what can be learned by a rule. Hence *originality* must be its first property . . . its products must be models, i.e., *exemplary* . . . genius is entirely opposed to the *spirit of imitation*. Now since learning is nothing but imitation, it follows that the greatest ability and teachableness . . . cannot avail for genius . . . we can readily learn all that *Newton* has set forth . . . but we cannot learn to write spirited poetry, however express may be the precepts of the art and however excellent its models . . . artistic skill cannot be communicated; it is imparted to every artist immediately by the hand of nature. . . . There is therefore for beautiful art only a *manner* (modus), not a *method* of teaching (methodus). The master must show what the pupil is to do and how he is to do it; and the universal rules, under which at last he brings his procedure, serve rather for bringing the main points back to his remembrance when the occasion requires, than for prescribing them to him. Nevertheless regard must be had here to a certain ideal, which

art must have before its eyes, although it cannot be completely attained in practice." [12]

Kant's statement is worthy of a hundred pages of gloss, which there is no space here to make. I must therefore confine myself to two points, in one which, as it seems to me, he mistakes his own insight, and another in which he helps to reestablish the truth implicit in it. When he tells us that the genius of the artist is entirely opposed to the spirit of imitations, he means, I take it, not just that the creative art transcends any formulas which the artist may happen to use, but that the interest of his production, as an individual work, lies, not in its conformity, or failure to conform, to any rule, but ultimately in the design he achieves in the work itself. For us, his appreciative recreative admirers, therefore, any failure either on our part or his, to conform to a rule is no test of its own artistic merit or achievement. In another way, so to say, the interest is not in the theme, but in its variations, not in the genre, but in its handling, not in the style but its individual inflections.

But Kant contradicts himself when he says that learning is nothing but imitation, and its success the accuracy of the imitation. And this for two reasons. In the first place, works of art themselves do provide models of a sort, exempla, or as Matthew Arnold puts it, touchstones, of fineness or excellence. There is no rule to be educed from the works of exemplary genius, but nonetheless there remains a basis or ground for significant comparisons. Thus by stages, and with the aid of such exempla, we learn that tact or judgment which enables us, in contemplating other works, to distinguish relevant from irrelevant possibilities of significant meaning that enhance its value. Correspondingly, our critical communications, upon which depends the possibility of teaching, especially on their higher levels, constitute communication of a distinctive sort whose relevance, however, remains for each person to establish, according to his own developed powers of imagination and judgment. Accordingly, critical communication provides only a problematic match between what is asserted and what is apprehended. Within it, as in every domain of humane learning, an element of freedom, and hence a chance of misunderstanding, is forever possible. But this possibility is a function, not of our inarticulateness or incapacity for understanding; rather is it a quality of the "object" under discussion. Because its possibilities are open and available to us as teachers and students in a purely exemplary way,

[12] Quoted in *Three Historical Philosophies of Education*, by William Frankena, Scott Foresman and Co., 1965. Cf. pp 89 ff.

what we teach and what we learn can never be expected to correspond exactly to "what is there." Indeed, if it could, that very fact would show that we would not be teaching or learning something about a work of art, but about a phenomenon whose only significance lies in its conformity to some general scheme or classification or in its power to confirm or disconfirm some putative law of nature.

Put in this way, however, the basic power of the teacher of art is badly represented. For it is not so much a question of what the teacher cannot do, but of what he can do. For his best students he manages to illuminate and preserve the vital distinction between the instance which conforms to a settled rule and the exemplum which, in virtue of its exemplary use, does not. He also elicits imaginative awareness of artistic possibilities, and of their importance, even though, as Kant intimates, he can offer no formula for finding them. But, for the gifted student, he can do more. For at his best he himself provides an exemplum: a continuous presence who by his talk and his gestures, as well as his reticences, conveys an awareness of what it is to look for true possibilities in a work of art, what it is to find a significant artistic form, and what it is to develop an authentic taste which at the same time respects the legitimate differences both between authentic readings of a work of art and between such readings and the uses to which individual persons may put the arts in compassing their own material ends. By his example, in a word, the teacher imbues the student with a sense of his own proper freedom as well as of the responsibilities which that freedom entails. His exemplary task is thus to awaken and sophisticate independent judgment, and in so doing, to make clear that judgment always has an end beyond itself which each student must realize in his own way.

At bottom, then, as Kant says, there can be no method or *methodus* of teaching the arts but only a *modus* or manner. But this remains a form of teaching all the same, as anyone who has pondered the writings of an inspired writer such as Arnold, Eliot, Tovey, or Berenson well knows. In fact it may well be the most difficult and demanding of all the forms of education.

One last word about the passage from Kant quoted above, which I shall use in a manner somewhat different from what he may have intended. Kant seems here to have in mind only the relationship of the master artist-teacher to his apprentices, who in due course may become artists in their own right. And his remarks about this relationship are just. My purpose here is different. For the sake of discussion, I shall assume that the student's interest is primarily appreciative and recreative, that he is not an apprentice-artist, but, more humbly, one who aspires only to a richer understanding of works

already in being. The point is that he, too, can learn, not only from the teacher's imaginative commentaries, but from directed forms of practice—drawing, composing, writing—which alone can give his eye, ear, and mind the special training they need for seeing, hearing, and imagining with an instructed and focused mind. Drawing and playing invest the drawer and player with a sense both of difficulties and of difficulties surmounted; the hand, here, leads the eye, and, as Kant suggests, brings back to the mind a sense of the virtues of a fine performance which is itself the product of accomplished work as well as of genius. In a work, knowing something of *how* the painter draws and paints, the student (as well as the teacher) is enabled to discover in the individual stroke of genius the skill and the effort which makes that genius apt for its own creative intentions.

But there is a further virtue in this mode of instruction, implicit in Berenson's own discussions of the tactile values which give such weight and power to the frescoes of a Giotto or a Masaccio. For these values are always apprehended concretely and not merely descriptively and illustratively. Because of this they are fully understood only by one who has taken a brush in his hand and discovered, with a teacher's help, how much has to be done in order to accomplish the far from simple purpose of mixing paints, drawing a circle, or converting a series of brush strokes into a painterly action that fulfills an as yet inchoate and unformed intention. Praxis! It is practice, and actions informed by practice that give substance to art. And it is only through practice and its resultant achievements that we are enabled to see how and why the work of genius is not merely an "aesthetic" gift of the gods, but a human artifice, set in its own motion by the art and the work of the artist.

The point must now be generalized. The ordinary "lover of art" whose eye has no hand to steady it and give it point and focus, is to that very extent alienated from painting. He can overcome his alienation only by actions of his own that are fundable back into acts of perception which enable him to achieve a substantial awareness of what the artist has done. The "realistic" art, so greatly prized in the Soviet Union, does not in the least exemplify this principle implicit in what I take to be Marx's and, behind him, Kant's aesthetics. Just the contrary, it offers us only a static illustration through which we may conceivably learn something about the external circumstances of a worker's life, but nothing of his work. As art it fails because it degrades the artist, treats him only as a duplicating machine that turns out endless copies of historical, sociological, and ideological information. The true lesson of Marx is that the artist's achievement lies not in

someone else's actions which he attempts unavailingly to copy, but in a significant action of his own. And for us, as observers, that action moves and exalts us only through the work that prepares us for our own congruent acts of recreative perception.

Here the artist himself once again becomes a teacher and we, his students, bring away from our experience of his work an exemplary fund of learning which serves us again and again in our efforts to find our way into other works of art. Teaching and learning, in all their various ways, are forms of work, and work is never a matter only of happy chances and insights. We learn by doing and by the doings of skilled and disciplined teachers who themselves are at the same time emancipated from the many errors of misplaced intention, including those of imitations, scientism, and mindless aestheticism.

IV. Conclusion

And now for an all too schematic resume. What makes teaching and learning in the arts such a complex and arduous affair is that it amounts to a virtual summation of all the arts of education itself. For teachers of appreciation in any art themselves require all the powers necessary for recognizing all the varied contributions which teaching and learning can make to artistic understanding and appreciation. First and last there is the guidance of eye and mind into the intentional object itself. This demands a developing ability to determine what properly does and does not belong to the many-leveled design of the work of art. And in turn this involves the ability to distinguish the artifact from a thing, and the purposeful artifact from the purposive design. It involves the ability to perceive the representational forms present in the work, and their complex internal relations to one another. Beyond this it demands also that we know how to convert raw sensations into discriminated perceptions of line or color, along with their attendant expressive qualities. It requires further the stretched and developed imagination, gained through previous encounters with works of art, which enables us to convert our understanding of genre and style into artistic metaphors for the illumination of a particular work. And finally, but not least, it involves that wide experience of relevant life which enables the free mind to apprehend some of the possibilities of human being of which every work of art is a celebration.

In the sphere of art education, as in education everywhere in the humanities, we at last perceive that every form of teaching and learning, from the explanation to the pointer, has its appropriate use. But we realize

also that explanations as well as pointers subserve ends beyond themselves, and that education, although a delightful thing both for the teacher and the learner, necessarily moves toward a life beyond itself. We realize also how unavailing are all our explanations and gestures without tact and judgment, those indispensable powers for determining what is and is not relevant when, in one way or another, our existence is in jeopardy. And judgment too, as we have seen, can be learned, though only by slow stages and with the help of exemplary models. But in acquiring judgment two other things are also learned: one, that only a small part of learning is a matter of following rules, the other, that judgment is always a servant never a master. For judgment, together with all the preparation that lies behind it, is a hindrance unless it brings the judge himself back into the world of the thing judged and makes him an imperiled participant in its exigent actions and designs. In fact, the judge, for whom judgment is an end, is no judge at all, but an executioner whose first victim is himself. Nor can he succeed without the developed skills and sensibilities that enable him to appreciate what the man he judges has intended, how he has done his work, under what stresses he has acted, and what precedents he has had at his disposal. For work of any sort, including above all the work of the artist, is always a serious, if also, on occasion, golden, thing, not an outpouring of an unconscious, organic response to surface irritations, but an achievement which is the product of a long sequence of human actions.

The teacher Virgil could lead his pupil Dante only to the upper verge of purgatory. Nor can any Virgil take us further. For in the end we are confronted, in this time and in this place, with a unique and perilous engagement with an act of creation which is all our own. The actuality of a work of art, like a life, is a fund of possibilities, and possibilities which exist only for beings who themselves are free. God, if God there be, may possess them all. For individual men, however, the actuality of a work of art is always something less. But in understanding this fact, we are taught one thing more which is the great moral gift of all humane learning: that humility, that tolerance, and that undogmatic assurance which is the priceless possession of the liberal mind. But here we verge on other dimensions of humanistic education that must be described in another place.